

EXHIBIT B

Dear Judge White,

5.22.23

Throughout my life I have had significant life-changing events - some great, some good, and some bad. June 27, 2023 is also going to be a significant life-changing event because you will decide the course of my future. I would like to tell you more about myself and why I am here.

From what you have read about me in the pleadings reflects only a glimpse of a very broken and pathetic version of who I spiraled into - a direct result of a very painful life-changing event that I experienced in November 2007. An event that altered who I was and changed how I handled personal relationships.

In November 2007, my father committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning. I knew he had problems but I was unaware of how depressed he was. I was the last person he spoke to and I snapped at him - not because I was upset with him but because I was under a tight deadline at work. I had no idea that would be our last conversation-EVER. It wasn't until I was cleaning out his place that I found a receipt from ACE where he purchased the pvc hose and duct tape in which to end his life. I began to tremble when I noticed the date and time - approx. an hour after our phonecall. In that moment, I realized that my reaction toward my father, during our call, was the tipping point in his resolve to take his life.

Since then, the "what-ifs" have haunted me... "what if I had only been more clear with him on the phone?"

"What if I had paid closer attention to him in those last weeks... maybe I would have noticed him spiraling..." My father had ALWAYS been there for me and I relied on him for mental and emotional support. The resulting grief absolutely paralyzed me and I could barely function in the year that followed. Given the intensity of the guilt, regret, shame, and sorrow that I became anchored to, the principles and values that were once ingrained slowly diminished. I became afraid of rejection and feared abandonment. I conceded to the wants and needs of my partners, vowing that I would never make someone feel sad or ashamed of themselves to the point they would ever resort to suicide as their only option. Instead of healing from the grief and trauma of my father's death, I lowered my standards.

Fast forward a decade and I became a single mother of two girls, going through a volatile divorce, culminating in my ex-husband physically abusing me several times in front of my daughters. When co-defendant Matt Pelton found me on Facebook, I felt as if I might still have a chance at my "happily ever after". Even though my marriage was over, Matt assured me his marriage was over too and that he wanted to wait until his oldest son graduated high school before filing. As such, everything about the two of us had to remain a secret. That was easy to do because I didn't really know anyone here and my mom and sister lived out of state.

It wasn't until nearly the end of our relationship when Matt misinterpreted a random innocent statement I made about a group of teenaged girls in a parking lot as tacit tolerance for the secret he had hidden from

from everybody. Not only was I completely unprepared for what he would tell me, I was completely unprepared for what would surface in me. That is when he confessed that he was attracted to teenage girls and he contemplated suicide many times because he felt he could never be "normal". And in that ONE moment, I froze, but my mind spun right back to that pivotal moment when I realized what my Dad did because of how I made him feel. And although I was shocked and in a state of disbelief over what Matt had just shared, the familiar words I had silently repeated to myself, over and over again in the year following my Dad's death, went through my mind "...anything and everything can be fixed..." In a moment of panic and fear I blurted out, "It's ok, you can get help...I will help you...you're not alone...it's just a fantasy, right?" Little did I know that Matt had no intention of seeking help at all.

It didn't occur to me that he viewed my daughters in THAT regard - he had been a father figure to them during our relationship. It didn't occur to me that he would regard them as anything but daughter figures.

A short time elapsed before he brought the subject up again. His requests started small, but as the relationship progressed so did the troubling behavior and choices. We both drank to excess - I found myself drinking more and more to avoid dealing with the pain in my life. My decisions to gratify Matt's sexual proclivities

were governed by my flawed paradigm that I had become accustomed to operating from, coupled with daily consumption of alcohol. As long as I complied with his demands, the more he showered me with love and attention - the two things I craved but did not receive from either father of my children.

I ended the relationship in the Spring of 2021. I realized he used me and I was done. I had hit rock bottom - my drinking was out of control, I had no friends, I was no longer close with my mother and sister, I let myself go physically and mentally, and I was ashamed of my actions as a mother.

I finally felt relieved from the pressures of that relationship. I began drinking less, I began cultivating friendships, and began a health regimen. I put my relationship with my children back into a healthy perspective and was in the process of planning a vacation for the three of us. But, Matt could never stay away for long and in August 2021 he reached out. My youngest daughter overheard that conversation and told my oldest daughter that he called. Neither ever heard my last conversation with Matt when I told him, in that conversation, that I was moving on.

There are no words that can adequately convey how sorry and remorseful I am that I compromised my daughter. I am absolutely ashamed and disgusted with myself. If

I could go back in time and change it, I would. If I could absorb the pain I have caused my daughters, I would. At the time, I delusionally believed I was not harming my daughters because I had specific boundaries in place that I believed Matt was adhering to.

I regret and I am sorry that I was not stronger on the day that he confessed to me. I am so sorry and deeply remorseful for my shameful complicity. I am so sorry and regretful that their lives have been turned upside down and that they are separated and unable to live together, as sisters should.

I have ruined my family and I carry that shame and sorrow everyday. I became so consumed with trying to find a "happily ever after" for the three of us by thinking it had to be completed with a partner and father figure that I never stopped to realize that my daughters are, and always will be, my true "happily ever after." I cannot say sorry enough. I failed my children on many levels and I understand now the gravity and repercussions as a result. The worst of the consequences is knowing my daughters think or believe I do not love them. I understand why and how they would think that. As a mother I was supposed to protect them, and I failed.

In retrospect, it was never an issue of me not loving my daughters - it's that I didn't love myself

enough to believe I deserved better. I was operating on fear and pain that became deeply rooted since losing my father. And now my daughters, whom I love with my whole heart, are paying the price for it when instead it should just be me.

When I was initially incarcerated I was a wreck. I didn't eat and I laid in my cell, crying and sleeping. Slowly I integrated and began speaking with women from all walks of life. Their stories horrified me - approx 98% of them suffered mild to severe sexual abuse which led to a life of crime and drugs. I became terrified at the thought of my daughters following in those footsteps.

One day a fellow inmate came to me and said, "While you are here, do the work on yourself... reflect... think... soul search... figure out where you went wrong and fix it from inside... do the work because one day when your daughters come to you, and they very likely will, you will be mentally and emotionally strong to give them what they need as a mother." And I took her advice.

I became a model inmate and trustee. I enrolled in classes, edifying myself with Parenting, Anger Management, Substance Abuse, Trauma & Healing. I read all of the self-help books and motivational books I could find. I worked hard at everything and exercised discipline and restraint while navigating the jail politics

and practices. The intensity of being incarcerated has required all of my mental, emotional, physical energy, and determination. During the times I didn't think I could survive another day in jail I would think of my kids and how I owed them this. Everytime I walked away from a confrontation it was because of my daughters. When I was assaulted by an inmate, because of my charges, I did not fight back because I did not want to jeopardize the curriculum that helped me attain the positive self-growth and improvement I worked so hard to accomplish.

My mother told me that my oldest stated at one point that she felt that I chose Matt over her and her sister. Hearing that was devastating and shook me to my core. That was the driving factor that prompted me to cooperate and not go to trial. I could not have my daughters see me sitting next to him at the defense table, thinking or believing I was choosing him, or protecting him. I chose to do the right thing by being accountable for my actions.

This experience has plunged me into an awareness that has forever changed me. Talking with inmates, hearing their struggles and experiences of abuse, empathizing with their pain. And one day, when my daughters reach out to me I will be able and better equipped to help them work through their pain and struggles.

I am grateful that my children are with family and that they are safe and building a new normal. I am grateful that my relationship with my mother is the best it has been.

in over a decade. For the longest time after my arrest our communication was filled with tension and yelling. It was difficult for me to know that she was angry with me. She had every right to be. I didn't give up and I listened to her and her pain and confusion and disgust. As much as I want to make amends with my daughters, I wanted and needed to make amends with my mom. I continued to do the work and I have opened up to her more than I ever have, and she listened and she was patient with me. She recently told me she was proud of me for having made such positive personal growth during my incarceration. I cherish that as I cannot even remember the last time she told me she was proud of me. My mother is turning 80 and it pains us both to know that my sentence will likely outlive her. We wont be able to celebrate any more holidays or birthdays together. We wont be able to have one last vacation all together or even something as simple, but yet so meaningful, as a hug.

I am truly sorry that all of this had to come at the expense of my daughters. Keeping secrets coupled with years of self-loathing is heavy, and hard, and sad and exhausting. Everything is out in the open and I have told the shameful truth. I am accountable for my actions and maybe, just maybe, my daughters can be proud of me. I am always proud of them. It also means that I relinquish the destructive habits I used as coping mechanisms.

Although I wish I had never allowed this to happen, I am grateful that we have people in the judicial system who are mentally and emotionally strong enough to fight for the rights and safety of our children because they cannot fight for themselves. These same people who hear about, or see horrific unimaginable things and yet still mentally strong and professional to perform their jobs, everyday.

I once said to Agent Holcombe, "I've seen your name in the paper lately." He was surprised and said, "Good... I hope?" I said, "I have to say that after hearing so many experiences of sexual abuse from the inmates and how those experiences have affected them... thank you for everything you do. I just had no idea the horrors." I meant that.

Thank you especially to my attorney, Julia Jayne, for believing in me and working with me. Ms. Jayne was gentle with me when I needed it, motivating when I needed it, and firm with me when I needed it.

One of my favorite motivational quotes that now guides my life is, "Everybody has two lives - everybody. The second one begins the moment you realize that you only have one." My moment of awakening occurred in jail.

I know that I must serve time for what I

am guilty of, and I have done my best to prepare for this even though I am afraid. What I humbly ask of you, Your Honor, is for the utmost leniency. For the first time in over a decade, I know now what I'm made of. I know what's really important in life. For me, it is making amends with my daughters and the rest of my family. I know where, how, and why I went wrong and I want to put into practice all that I have learned. My hope is for the minimum so that I can give my family my maximum in the time I have left. I vow to spend every day proving you right.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

Heather Aharbian

5.22.2023